

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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USIA-06 DOE-11 SOE-02 SSC-01 /083 W
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R 011143Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7281
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/NESA//
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
COMIDEASTFOR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ABU DHABI 0286

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MORG, MPOL, TC
SUBJECT: REORGANIZATION OF ARMED FORCES ANNOUNCED: SULTAN BIN
ZAYID TO BE NEW COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL DECREE EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 1
PROVIDES FOR UNIFICATION OF ALL LAND, SEA, AND AIR FORCES
OF UAE AND FOR ABOLITION OF REGIONAL COMMANDS BASED UPON
FORMERLY INDEPENDENT EMIRATE DEFENSE FORCES. ARMED
FORCES NOW TO BE REORGANIZED INTO "DIVISIONS"
DIRECTLY UNDER COMMAND OF ARMED FORCES GENERAL
HEADQUARTERS. SHAIKH SULTAN BIN ZAYID, SON OF
PRESIDENT, PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER AND NAMED TO NEW
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POST OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. THESE STEPS APPARENTLY
TAKEN UNILATERALLY BY PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID
FOLLOWING FAILURE OF SUPREME COUNCIL OF RULERS TO
AGREE UPON REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS RECOMMENDED BY
UAE'S JORDANIAN CHIEF OF STAFF AND ENDORSED BY
TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE,
ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE, AND CHIEF OF STAFF. REORGANI-

ZATION AIMS AT FURTHER REDUCING PAROCHIALISM AMONG ARMED FORCES AND TIGHTENING FEDERAL CONTROL OVER DEFENSE MATTERS. AS ABU DHABI PRESENTLY PROVIDES MOST OF DEFENSE BUDGET, IT IS IN STRONG POSITION TO PRESSURE OTHER EMIRATES TO GO ALONG WITH REORGANIZATION.

END SUMMARY

2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEBRUARY 1 REORGANIZATION OF ARMED FORCES IS RESULT OF UAE PRESIDENT SHEIKH ZAYID'S GROWING DISATISFACTION IN THE DEGREE OF MILITARY INTEGRATION ACHIEVED FOLLOWING STEPS TAKEN IN MAY 1976. DESPITE 1976 FORMAL MERGER OF THE SEPARATE EMIRATE DEFENSE FORCES, MILITARY UNIFICATION HAS REMAINED SKIN-DEEP. THE 1976 MERGER CREATED A GENERAL STAFF HEADQUARTERS IN ABU DHABI, HEADED BY SECONDED JORDANIAN MAJOR GENERAL AWWAD KHALDI AND STAFFED LARGELY BY FOREIGN CONTRACT AND SECONDED OFFICERS. LINES OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN THAT HEADQUARTERS, THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IN DUBAI, AND HEADQUARTERS OF SEPARATE REGIONAL MILITARY COMMANDS CORRESPONDING TO FORMER ABU DHABI (WESTERN), DUBAI (CENTRAL) AND RAS AL-KHAIMA (NORTHERN) DEFENSE FORCES PLUS OLD TRUCIAL OMAN SCOUTS (NOW THE YARMOUK BRIGADE) HAVE CONTINUED TO BE BLURRED. SOME COMMON TRAINING, E.G., IN ARTILLERY, HAS OCCURRED AND ALL
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REGIONAL COMMANDS HAVE CONTRIBUTED UNITS TO COMPOSITE UAE BATTALION STATIONED IN LEBANON WITH ARAB LEAGUE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE. IN OTHER AREAS, INCLUDING ARMAMENTS PURCHASES, STANDARDIZATION OF EQUIPMENT INVENTORIES, AND RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTIONS, COORDINATION AMONG REGIONAL COMMANDS HAS BEEN LESS SATISFACTORY. OUTSIDE OF LEBANON, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE IF ANY INTERCHANGE AMONG PERSONNEL OF DIFFERENT REGIONAL COMMANDS BEYOND SPORTS COMPETITIONS. PAROCHIAL CHARACTER OF EACH REGIONAL COMMAND HAS BEEN UNDERSCORED BY FACT THAT COLONELS COMMANDING COMMANDS BASED ON ABU DHABI, DUBAI, AND RAS AL-KHAIMAH RESPECTIVELY ARE SONS OF RULERS OF THOSE EMIRATES AND OBVIOUSLY OWE THEIR APPOINTMENTS (ALL THREE ARE IN THEIR TWENTIES AN RELATIVELY INEXPERIENCED OFFICERS) TO THEIR FATHERS' DESIRES TO MAINTAIN FIRM CONTROL OVER "THEIR" DEFENSE FORCES.

3. WITH PERIOD OF HIS SECONDMENT TO UAE DUE TO EXPIRE THIS SPRING, GENERAL KHALDI LAST FALL SUBMITTED TO SHAIKH ZAYID AS SUPREME COMMANDER OF ARMED FORCES MEMORANDUM CONTRAINING HIS RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR STRENGTHENING UNIFICATION OF ARMED FORCES. WE DO NOT KNOW CONTENTS OF KHALDI MEMO, BUT UNDERSTAND MAJOR THRUST OF IT WAS TO PROPOSE GREATER CONTROL BY CHEIF OF STAFF AND ARMED FORCES GENERAL HEADQUARTERS OVER ACTIVITIES OF REGIONAL MILITARY COMMANDS, DEEMPHASIS OF THEIR PAROCHIAL TERRITORIAL CHARACTER, AND ROUTINE TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL AND OF ENTIRE UNITS TO VARIOUS POSTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AS NEEDS OF THE SERVICE REQUIRE.

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4. KHALDI MEMO WAS REFERRED BY ZAYID TO SUPREME COUNCIL OF RULERS IN TURN ESTABLISHED LAST FALL TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE TO STUDY ITS PROPOSALS AND SUBMIT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SUPREME COUNCIL. TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE WAS COMPOSED OF SHAIKH KHALIFAH BIN ZAYID, CROWN PRINCE OF ABU DHABI, AND DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER OF ARMED FORCES; MINISTER OF DEFENSE SHAIKH MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID OF DUBAI; AND GENERAL KHALDI. COMMITTEE THUS NICELY BALANCED BETWEEN ABU DHABI AND DUBAI WITH KHALDI AS MORE OR LESS

NEUTRAL VOICE. INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF TRI-PARTITE COMMITTEE WERE SUBMITTED TO SUPREME COUNCIL AT THEIR MEETING IN DECEMBER BUT WERE RETURNED WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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REQUEST FOR ALTERATIONS. THESE WERE TO BE SUBMITTED AT JANUARY MEETING OF SUPREME COUNCIL. HOWEVER, LATTER UNABLE TO REACH DECISION, APPARENTLY AS CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTANCE OF SHAIKHS RASHID OF DUBAI AND SAQR OF RAS AL-KHAIMAH TO SURRENDERING CONTROL OVER "THEIR" DEFENSE FORCES TO A GENERAL COMMAND LIKELY TO BE DOMINATED BY ABU DHABI. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS FAILING TO RESOLVE THIS IMPASSE, ZAYID TOOK UNILATERAL ACTION TO ANNOUNCE REORGANIZATION OF ARMED FORCES AND TO NAME HIS SON SULTAN AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

5. DECREE NO. 1 OF JANUARY 20, 1978 (NOT PUBLISHED HOWEVER UNTIL FEBRUARY 1) PROVIDES UNIFICATION OF THE LAND, AIR, AND SEA FORCES AT ALL LEVELS AND FOR ABOLITION OF THE WESTERN, CENTRAL AND NORTHERN REGIONAL COMMANDS. FORMER REGIONAL COMMANDS ARE TO BE CONVERTED INTO DIVISIONS (ARABIC: LIWAS) LINKED DIRECTLY WITH ARMED FORCES GENERAL HEADQUARTERS. DECREE FURTHER STATES THAT THIS DECISION IS BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE AND THAT IT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH 1976 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THAT STIPULATED ESTABLISHMENT OF AIR, LAND, AND SEA FORCES TO BE SOLE RIGHT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (1971 PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION STILL IN FORCE HAD ORIGINALLY PERMITTED INDIVIDUAL EMIRATES AS WELL AS FEDERAL AUTHORITY TO MAINTAIN DEFENSE FORCES.) DECREE EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1.

6. SEPARATE DECREE BY ZAYID NAMED HIS SECOND SON SULTAN, COMMANDER OF WESTERN MILITARY COMMAND, AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES AND PROMOTED HIM FROM COLONEL TO BRIGADIER. SULTAN IS IN HIS MID-CONFIDENTIAL

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TWENTIES, ATTENDED SANDHURST AND EGYPTIAN ARMY STAFF COLLEGE, AND HAS COMMANDED WESTERN MILITARY COMMAND SINCE 1976. HE IS REGARDED BY MANY AS BRIGHT, SERIOUS ABOUT HIS JOB, AND ATTENTIVE TO DETAILS. HE IS ALSO CONSIDERED AMBITIOUS, ARROGANT, AND STILL COMPARATIVELY INEXPERIENCED -- A SUBALTERN IN A GENERAL'S UNIFORM.

HOW EFFECTIVE HE WILL BE IN IMPOSING HIS WILL ON HIS
CONTEMPORARIES IN COMMAND OF MILITARY UNITS OUTSIDE
ABU DHABI REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

7. TO SOME DEGREE ABU DHABI, WHICH HOLDS THE
PURSE STRINGS AND IS NOW PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF
FUNDING FOR ALL MILITARY FORCES IN UAE, IS IN
STRONG POSITION TO EXERT PRESSURE ON OTHER RULERS
TO GO ALONG WITH REORGANIZATION. LATTER COULD
PRESUMABLY RESIST BY DIVERTING FUNDS FROM DEVELOP-
MENT OR OTHER PRUPOSES TO MAINTENANCE OF THEIR
MILITARY FORCES AS QUASI-INDEPENDENT ENTITIES.
HOWEVER, SUCH ACTIONS WOULD BE BOTH EXPENSIVE AND
POLITICALLY RISKY, ESPECIALLY FOR SHAIKH SAQR WHO
AT THIS TIME NEEDS BACKING OF ZAYID IF HE IS TO
RESIST OMANI DEMANDS FOR SIGNIFICANT CHUNK OF RAS
AL-KHAIMA TERRITORY.

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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 3 ABU DHABI 0286

8. LEFT UNDEFINED BY FEBRUARY 1 REORGANIZATION IS

STATUS OF ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE KHALIFAH WHO, WAS
LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER, WAS
NOMINALLY SECOND ONLY TO SHAIKH ZAYID IN MILITARY
CHAIN OF COMMAND. IN FACT, KHALIFAH NOT KNOWN TO
HAVE HAD ANY FORMAL MILITARY TRAINING AND RARELY
APPEARED IN UNIFORM OR AT GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, CONFINING
HIMSELF PRIMARILY TO CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS, PRESUMABLY
HE WILL CONTINUE TO FULFILL THESE UNDEMANDING TASKS
WHILE HIS YOUNGER HALF-BROTHER ACTUALLY RUNS THE
ARMED FORCES.

9. ALSO UNCLEAR IS WHO WILL FILL POST OF CHIEF
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OF STAFF ONCE GENERAL KHALDI DEPARTS. UAE MAY SEEK
ANOTHER OFFICER FROM OUTSIDE (JORDAN, EGYPT, OR
PAKISTAN) AS HIS REPLACEMENT BUT MORE LIKELY WOULD BE
ADVANCEMENT OF EITHER PRESENT ASSISTANT CHIEF OF
STAFF COLONEL MUHAMMAD SAID AL-BADIE OR ASSISTANT
COMMANDER OF WESTERN MILITARY COMMAND COLONEL SAID
MUBARAK TO THAT POST. FORMER, WHO IS SCION OF
PROMINENT ABU DHABI MERCHANT FAMILY AND WIDELY
REGARDED AS AMONG BEST PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS IN
ARMED FORCES, HAS EDGE OVER MUBARAK WHO IS OF
OMANI ORIGIN AND RECENTLY GOOFED IN TALKING OUT OF
TURN TO AN EGYPTIAN NEWSMAN ABOUT UAE MILITARY
PURCHASES. WASHINGTON ADDRESSEES MAY REMEMBER AL-
BADIE AS HEAD OF UAE ARMED FORCES TEAM THAT PAID
OBSERVATION VISIT TO CONUS MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
LAST SPRING.
DICKMAN

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Message Attributes

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